



News Release

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UDOH Breaks Ground on New Unified State Lab

State-of-the-art facility to replace existing lab on U of U campus

(Salt Lake City) – The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) and Gov. Jon Huntsman today celebrated the beginning of construction of the new Unified State Lab (USL). The USL is a three-story, 81,000 square-foot facility that will house a variety of public health laboratories and will replace the existing lab on the University of Utah campus. The \$31 million project is being constructed on existing state-owned land in Taylorsville and is expected to be complete in the fall of 2009.

“Most citizens in our state probably don’t realize it, but the state lab plays a critical role in protecting their health, their environment and their safety on a daily basis,” said Dr. David Sundwall, UDOH executive director. “From newborn disease screening, to air, water and soil testing, to chemical and bioterrorism preparedness, the lab is an important tool in ensuring the public’s well being.”

The existing lab, originally constructed in 1972, has become outdated and crowded, and lacks modern safety and engineering features. The USL, which was funded by the Utah State Legislature in 2007, will include such modern features as negative air pressure lab spaces and dedicated bio-safety facilities for testing for potentially dangerous agents like avian influenza, anthrax and the SARS virus.

“The existing state lab has served our citizens well over the years, but the time has come for a new Unified State Lab that will include the latest technology,” said Gov. Huntsman. “This facility will give our technicians additional space and the essential tools they need to perform critical health and safety tasks.”

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Lab services provided by staff at the USL include:

- Detecting, identifying and responding to emerging disease threats – be they natural or man-made, biological, chemical or radiological
- Newborn disease screening
- Drinking water certification
- Alcohol and drug testing for more than 200 Utah law enforcement agencies
- Certification of more than 1,400 clinical and environmental labs throughout the state
- Chemical and biological terrorism preparedness
- Water, soil and air testing
- Toxicology testing for the State Medical Examiner

Today's ceremony marked the beginning of construction of phase one of the USL. Future phases, which are currently unfunded, include consolidating lab functions from the Department of Agriculture and Food, Department of Public Safety and the Office of the Medical Examiner.

The USL is being designed and constructed through a collaborative design process by VCBO Architecture, Smith Group and Big-D Construction, and is being managed in partnership with the state's Division of Facilities Construction and Management.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.